

ORTHOPTERA RECORDING SCHEME

Newsletter No 13 - Summer 1988

1. NEWS FROM THE BIOLOGICAL RECORDS CENTRE

National Recording Scheme to continue

As recorders will know, it had been BRC's intention to end the present phase of Orthoptera recording with the 1987 field season and to publish an Atlas of Orthoptera in 1988/89. However, a succession of poor summers seems to have led to a dearth of records in recent years, despite the efforts of recorders.

You will see from the 'gap maps', compiled by Chris Haes, there are substantial areas of Britain and Ireland where apparently widespread and common species have not been recorded. A 'definitive' atlas with such gaps would not stand the test of time. It has therefore been decided that recording for the atlas will be extended for 2 further years (1988 and 1989). A wide appeal for records will be made, in 1988, to local records centres, county wildlife trusts and local natural history societies.

It is hoped that the publication of 3 books on Orthoptera in 1988 (see below) will enable more people to take an interest in the group and for them to contribute records in 1988 and 1989.

Let us all make 1988 and 1989 the years we put Orthoptera (and allied orders) 'on the map'.

Chris Haes continues as scheme organizer

In 1987 I was pleased to announce that Chris Haes has agreed to continue as scheme organizer. Chris is currently in the process of moving house to Cornwall, so that, for the present, all records and correspondence should be sent to Chris Haes, c/o Biological Records Centre. As soon as Chris has settled into his new address, BRC will send a circular, giving the new address, to all recorders.

I am sure you will all join me in offering Chris sincere condolences on the sudden death of his wife, Jane, last December.

Grasshoppers and allied insects of Great Britain and Ireland (Harley Books)

The book we are all waiting for! It includes among much else, vice-county and 10-km square distribution maps for all the species covered by the Orthoptera Recording Scheme, including the earwigs. The maps have been compiled by Harley Books from data collated by Chris Haes and therefore provide a useful interim statement on the distribution of species. Chris Haes has asked me to emphasize that the contribution of all recorders for the Orthoptera Recording Scheme is greatly valued.

Proposed timescale for the atlas

1988 : Field recording - records to Chris Haes

1989 : Field recording - all records to Chris Haes by 31 December

1990 (January-June) : data processing
(July-October) : text editing
(November-December) : assembly of maps/text for printer

1991 : Publication of atlas (late spring/early summer).

NB The Orthoptera Recording Scheme newsletter will continue to be issued annually during this period.

Paul T Harding (BRC)

2. THE GAP MAPS

Map 1

Hatching indicates areas which should be checked for any species including Dermaptera and Dictyoptera. The gaps include the offshore islands of Lundy, Arran, Eigg, the Saltee Islands off south-east Ireland and the 3 Arran islands, Inismore, Inishmaan and Inisheer, as well as Guernsey, Sark and Herm in the Channel Islands. The Shannon Estuary is now potentially the most important under-recorded district for orthopterans (see newsletter 12 'Priorities for recording', item 1). The islands mentioned are all sites of considerable potential interest for Orthoptera and all are known to support populations of grasshoppers.

Map 2 Omocestus viridulus (L.)

Hatching indicates some interesting apparent gaps, especially in the east and south-west of England. The situation needs particular attention in east Kent, Essex and the Lizard Peninsula. These are well surveyed districts for Orthoptera generally so it does appear that O. viridulus really is absent from large parts of these districts, but a final careful check is desirable. It would also be worth checking if this species is really absent from the north-west Highland zone, and extinct on the Orkney Islands, where it was recorded in the pre-1961 period!

Map 3 Chorthippus parallelus (Zetterstedt)

Although abundant in many districts, there appear to be some very interesting distribution gaps, which it would be worth checking this summer. The most intriguing is the apparent absence of C. parallelus from the coast of east Norfolk and most of the coast of north-east England and eastern Scotland. Low air humidity may be a limiting factor, but against this it is widespread and common around the Thames Estuary, the driest part of the country. It would also be worth checking if it occurs on Orkney mainland (it is present on Hoy) and on Guernsey, from which it has been reported, but not confirmed. The grasshopper also seems to be rare or absent from the 'mosses' of Lancashire, where low humidity is unlikely to be a limiting factor in its distribution. C. parallelus may be the most numerous grasshopper in Britain, but its patchy distribution merits careful investigation.

Map 4 Chorthippus albomarginatus (Degeer)

It is most desirable that the true distribution of this grasshopper in western Ireland is investigated; this population is remarkably isolated. C. albomarginatus is distinctly local in western Britain and its recorded distribution on the coasts of Lancashire and Cheshire urgently requires confirmation; all the records are old and the few voucher specimens so far located have proved to be of other species. It would also be interesting to discover if the recently located populations in Warwickshire are linked to those in the Thames Valley or eastern fenland or are truly isolated. It would also be worth noting the distribution of colour varieties, for as Ragge

(1965) pointed out, some colonies appeared to be of almost all one or perhaps two varieties whereas others include specimens of all colour variants together. The distribution of this plain-looking species in Britain and Ireland could well be of great ecological interest.

3. ORTHOPTERA IN ALDERNEY (1985)

Hendrik Devriese (Belgian Orthoptera Mapping Scheme) has very kindly sent me a list of species he recorded on Alderney in September 1985. These are: Tettigonia viridissima, Platycleis albopunctata f. jerseyana, Conocephalus discolor and Chorthippus brunneus. Devriese made the very interesting observation that C. brunneus was of a conspicuously small form, superficially like C. biguttulus or C. vagans, which does not seem to have been named yet. Perhaps it is sufficiently distinct to be awarded a named form, comparable to that of P. albopunctata. He also reported that he located no specimens of Pholidoptera griseoptera, Chorthippus vagans or C. parallelus so it seems clear that these tentatively recorded species can now be deleted from the list. In addition there was no mention of Tetrix spp., and none are listed for the island. Consequently the above 4 recorded species appear to be the only Orthoptera present on Alderney.

4. THREAT TO STENOBOOTHUS STIGMATICUS (Rambur)

I am informed by Dr L S Garrad that there is a proposal to extend a golf course over much of the eastern side of the Langness Peninsula and thus threaten the only known native colony of the lesser mottled grasshopper. If any recorder would care to offer constructive views about this I am sure Dr Garrad would appreciate them. Please send views to: Dr L S Garrad, The Manx Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man.

5. ORTHOPTERA BOOKS

1988 will see three, possibly four, new books on Orthoptera which should cover the needs of orthopterists of all kinds.

For the novice, needing an introduction to the subject there is a new addition to the admirable series by Shire Natural History:

Grasshoppers and bush-crickets of the British Isles
by Andrew Mahon at £1.25

A comprehensive reference book on British orthopteroides (replacing Ragge 1965) is provided by:

Grasshoppers and allied insects of Great Britain and Ireland
by Judith Marshall and Christopher Haes at £25 (including P&P for pre-publication orders)

Published by Harley Books, Martins, Great Horkeley, Colchester CO6 4AH. Paid orders to this address by the end of July 1988 will enable buyers to receive the special pre-publication offer of the ½ hour cassette of songs (normal price £5.75) free on receipt of order. Please state on your order that you are a recorder for the Orthoptera Recording Scheme and quote your recorder's numbers.

For those visiting the adjacent continent Collins' Field guide to grasshoppers and crickets of Britain and western Europe (translated from the original German by Mrs Ragge) should provide a very adequate coverage of most species likely to be found in north-west Europe and includes some remarkable photos of coloured-winged grasshoppers in flight.

It is also possible that Valerie Brown's Grasshoppers will be published with updated text. This book is especially valuable for those proposing to undertake serious field studies or research into Orthoptera.

6. POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE HURRICANE OF 15-16 OCTOBER 1987

The natural history of southern England may have been permanently altered by this disaster. Its effects upon the distributions and population sizes of many invertebrate species is likely to be apparent for decades.

It is probable that many of our native orthopteroides, with the obvious exception of Meconema thalassinum, will flourish in the herbaceous vegetation that is certain to develop on hitherto tree-shaded ground, over very large areas of the country. The species most likely to benefit are Pholidoptera griseoptera, Omocestus viridulus, Chorthippus brunneus, C. parallelus, Tetrix undulata, Ectobius lapponicus and E. pallidus. Conocephalus discolor is already in the process of a population expansion and the anticipated spread of coarser grasses over newly bared ground in warm localities is likely to give further impetus to this expansion. The same will probably apply to Metriopectera roeselii, along the Thames Valley and around the Thames estuary. In addition it is possible that very local species, such as Omocestus rufipes, Chorthippus vagans and Gomphocerippus rufus, will seem to appear "from nowhere" at new localities as a result of tiny, overlooked populations expanding to reach appreciable numbers. In consequence it may now be an ideal time in which to study Orthoptera populations in detail, especially if comparisons can be made between those in areas inflicted by the storm and those in less devastated sites to the west or north of the hurricane's path.

Changes in distributions of orthopterans which are likely to benefit from the widespread loss of tree cover may not become apparent at a 10-km square level, but could be significant on tetrad or 1-km square maps produced for county or area surveys in the next few years.

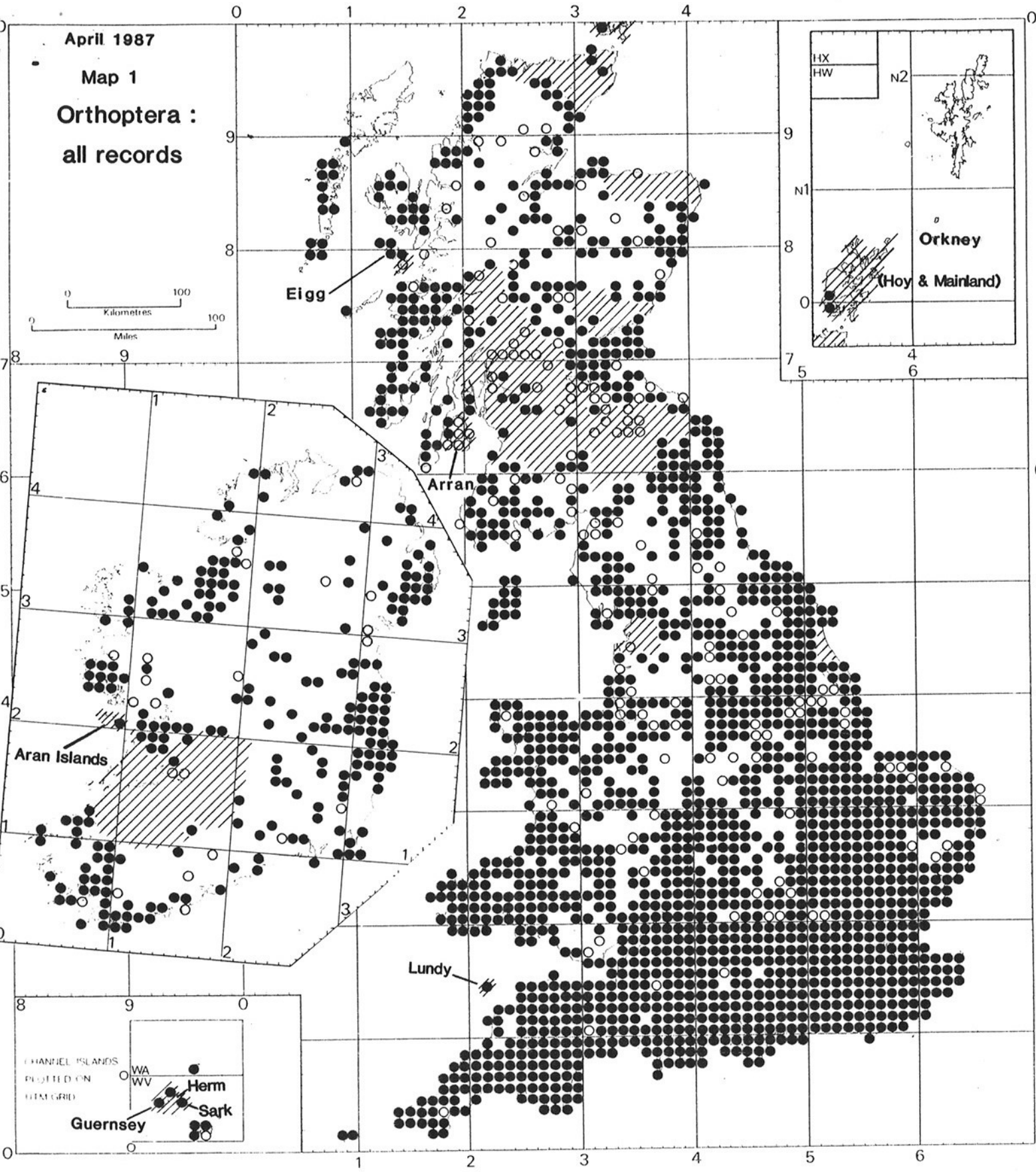
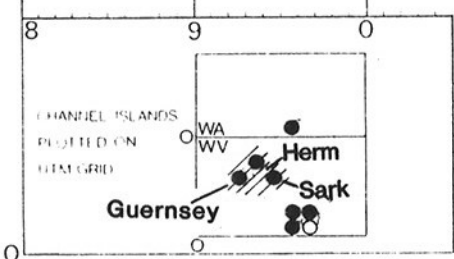
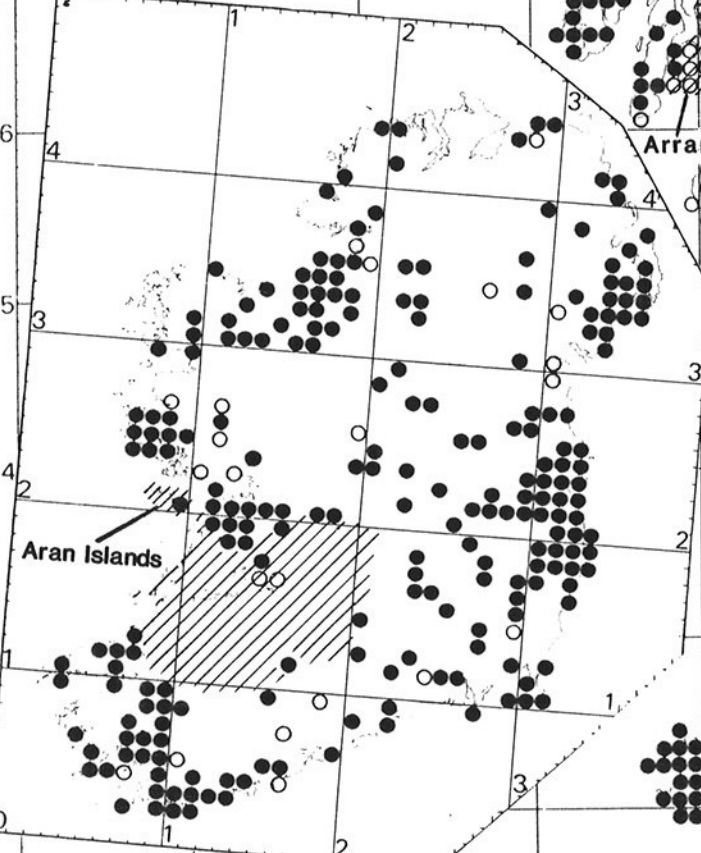
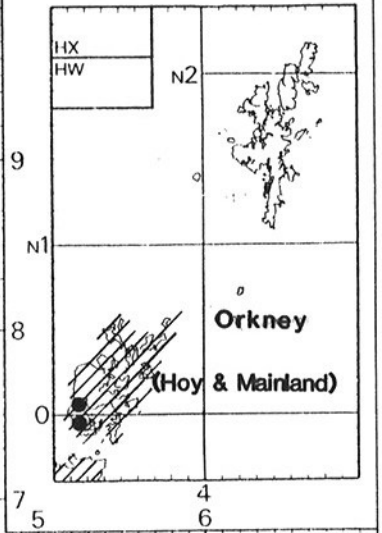
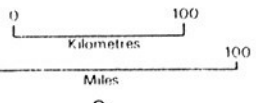
Newsletter editor: E C M Haes

All correspondence to: Biological Records Centre
Monks Wood Experimental Station
Abbots Ripton
Huntingdon
Cambs PE17 2LS

April 1987

Map 1

Orthoptera :
all records

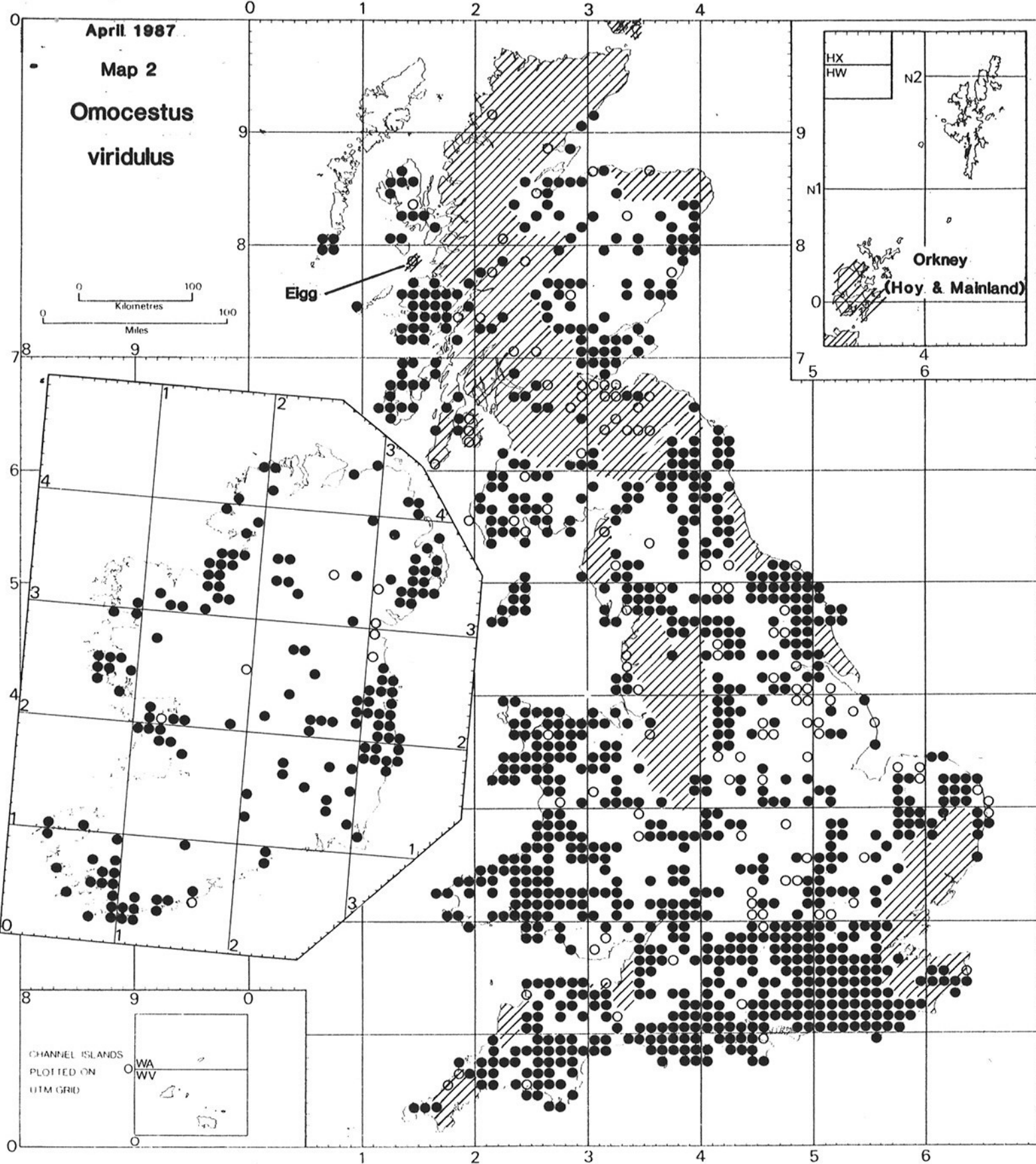
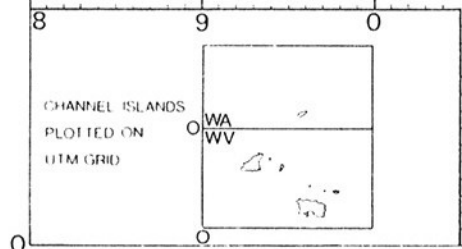
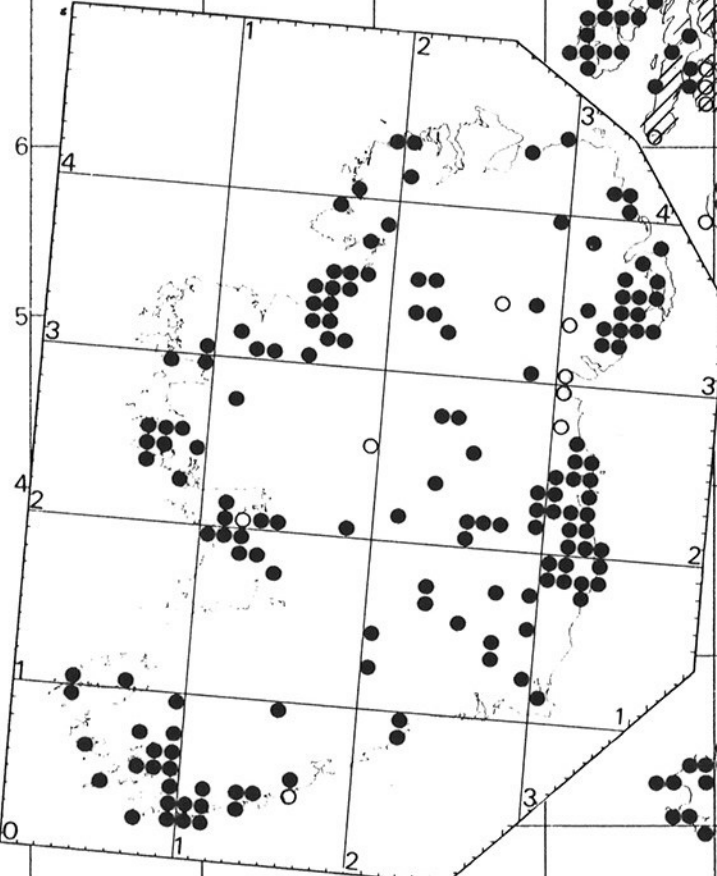
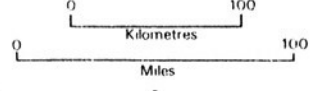
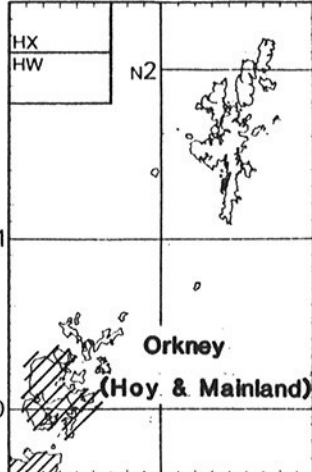


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Map 2

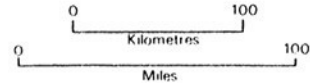
Omocestus viridulus

Elgg



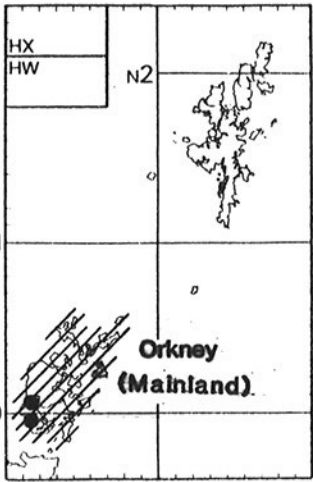
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Map 3
Chorthippus parallelus

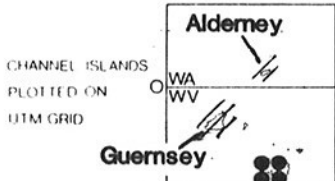
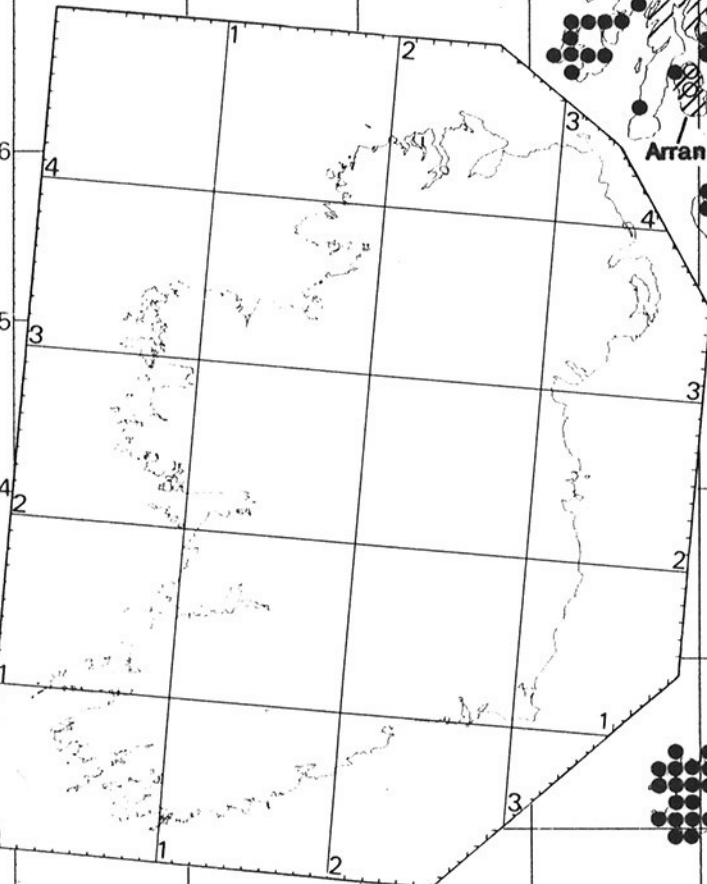


Eigg

Arran

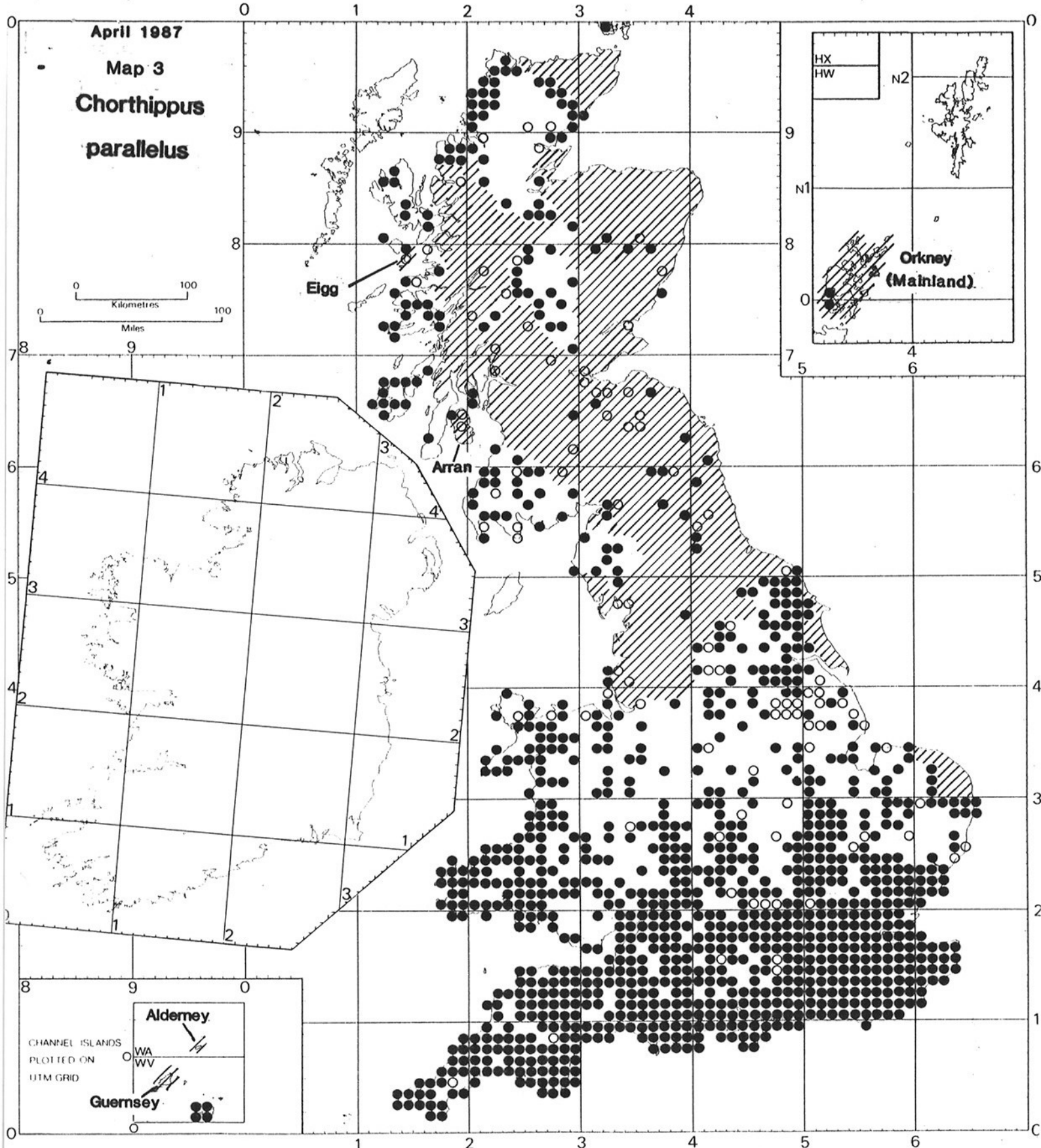


Orkney
(Mainland)



CHANNEL ISLANDS
PLOTTED ON
UTM GRID

Guernsey



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April 1987

Map 4

Chorthippus albomarginatus

